

DEPARTMENT OF ALCOHOL AND DRUG PROGRAMS
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**ADP BULLETIN**

Title OMEGA FIRE SPRINKLER HEADS		Issue Date: 04-23-98 Expiration Date:	Issue No. 9822
Deputy Director Approval (signed by) >Robert L. Jackson, R. Ph. Quality Assurance Division	Function [] Information Management [X] Quality Assurance [] Service Delivery [] Fiscal [X] Administration	Supersedes Bulletin/ADP Letter No.	

PURPOSE

This bulletin is to share information recently received from the Office of the State Fire Marshal (OSFM), California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection, regarding findings that automatic fire sprinklers under the "OMEGA" product-line name have "fused" and failed to open during fires. As such, those residential and commercial buildings/facilities which have fire suppression systems that incorporate fire sprinkler heads (Omega specifically) as part of the system, need to identify whether they have such sprinkler heads to test and replace where necessary.

DISCUSSION

The following excerpts were taken from materials provided to the Department by the OSFM:

Between 1983 and June 6, 1996, Central Sprinkler Company manufactured approximately eight million automatic fire sprinklers under the "OMEGA" product-line name. These fire sprinklers utilized an ethylene propylene (EDPM) rubber o-ring. In late 1995 or early 1996, a fire occurred in a building (Courtyard by Marriott Hotel, Detroit, Michigan) where the OMEGA fire sprinklers were installed. While no fatalities or injuries resulted from the fire, an investigation was initiated when it was determined that several fire sprinklers within the fire area of the building "fused" but failed to operate (open).

As a result of this fire and another fire which subsequently reflected the same nonoperation of the OMEGA fire sprinklers, a formal investigation was undertaken by various agencies to determine what was wrong.

On July 8, 1996, the California State Fire Marshal (Chief Ronny J. Coleman) wrote to Underwriters Laboratories (Follow-up Division) asking for their assistance, and also sent a copy to the United States Consumer Product Safety Commission informing them of the problem(s) with the OMEGA fire sprinklers. Since the July 1996 letter, the California State Fire Marshal has distributed two informational packets to the California Fire Service and Fire Protection Community. The June 5, 1997, packet (34-pages) and August 15, 1997, packet (17-pages), were intended to keep the fire service and fire protection professionals informed of the problem(s) associated with the OMEGA fire sprinklers, and to seek their assistance in identifying installations of these fire sprinklers.

Subsequent to the opening of these field investigations, other tests were conducted on the OMEGA fire sprinklers, by the U.S. Veterans Administration, National Institutes of Health, Factory Mutual Systems, Fairfax County Fire

Department (Fairfax, Virginia), and the City of Los Angeles Fire Department. Each has confirmed the problem, some with a higher percentage (42 percent) and some with a lower percentage (31 percent) of failure.

Central Sprinkler Company has attributed the problem to be a sealant (silicone-silicate liquid glass) added to the fire sprinkler system water and causing the EDPM o-ring to be lodged to the body of the fire sprinkler and to exposure of hydrocarbons (petroleum based cutting fluids) on the o-ring. Both situations are associated with "steel pipe" sprinkler systems.

NOTE: These conditions were found only in steel piping systems and there is no evidence of impaired operations in chlorinated poly vinyl chloride (CPVC), polybutelene (PB), or copper piping systems.

Central Sprinkler Company has discontinued the use of the EDPM o-ring and substituted a silicone o-ring as of June 7, 1996; however, millions of the Omega fire sprinklers were installed worldwide between 1983 and June 7, 1996, with the EDPM o-ring.

There have been no active product recalls issued by either Underwriters Laboratories or the United States Consumer Product Safety Commission to date.

REFERENCES

If there are questions on this subject, the following sources are available to provide additional information:

Mr. Andy Post, or
Mr. Kip Bilo
Central Sprinkler Company
451 North Cannon Avenue
Lansdale, PA 19446
1-800-523-6512

In addition, the OSFM maintains a website addressing this subject at <http://www.fire.ca.gov>. Linkage to both Central Sprinkler Company and Underwriters Laboratories exists at this website.

HISTORY

Not Applicable.

QUESTIONS/MAINTENANCE

Anyone impacted by this alert should contact the manufacturer, Central Sprinkler Company, or Underwriters Laboratories noted above. Your local fire authority can also provide additional information and assistance.

EXHIBITS

None.

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